WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A method for conferring tolerance to salt stress and drought stress in a monocot plant comprising:

transforming the monocot plant with an expression cassette comprising at least one ABRC unit, a minimal promoter, and a DNA molecule that increases tolerance to salt stress and drought stress in plants, wherein the at least one ABRC unit, the minimal promoter, and a DNA molecule are operably linked together to permit expression of the DNA molecule.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the monocot plant is selected from the group consisting of rice, wheat, maize, barley, oat, rye, millet, and sorghum.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the monocot plant is rice.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the DNA molecule that increases tolerance to salt stress and drought stress is selected from the group consisting of a Δ^1-pyrroline-5-carboxylate synthetase gene, *P5CS-129A*, *Hva1*, COR47, a mannitol 1-P-dehydrogenase gene, a gene for the biosynthesis of polyamines, a gene for the biosynthesis of glycine betaine, trehalose, D-ononitol or fructans, and a gene for regulating the expression of stress-responsive genes.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein the minimal promoter is Act1-100 of rice, a shortened α-amylase promoter of barley or rice, a shortened maize ubiquitin promoter, or a shortened CaMV 35S promoter.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one ABRC unit is from a barley *HVA22* gene or a barley *HVA1* gene.

7. A method according to claim 1, wherein the expression cassette comprises up to four of the ABRC units operably linked together.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein the expression cassette further comprises:

a DNA sequence coding a selectable marker.

9. A method according to claim 1, wherein the expression cassette is salt stress or drought stress inducible.

10. A method according to claim 1, wherein said transforming comprises:

propelling particles at cells of the monocot plant under conditions effective for the particles to penetrate into the cell interior and

introducing a plasmid comprising the at least one ABRC unit, the minimal promoter, and the DNA molecule that increases tolerance to salt stress and drought stress in plants into the cell interior.

11. A method according to claim 10, wherein the plasmid is selected from the group consisting of pJS112, pJP21, and pJPM001.

12. A method according to claim 10, wherein the plasmid is associated with the particles, whereby the plasmid is carried into the cell interior together with the particles.

13. A method according to claim 10, wherein the plasmid surrounds the cell and is drawn into the cell interior with the particles.

14. A method according to claim 1, wherein said transforming comprises:

contacting tissue of the monocot plant with an inoculum of a bacterium of the genus *Agrobacterium*, wherein the bacterium is transformed with a plasmid comprising the at least one ABRC unit, the minimal promoter, and the DNA molecule that increases tolerance to salt stress and drought stress in plants.

15. A method according to claim 14, wherein the plasmid is selected from the group consisting of pJS112, pJP21, and pJPM001.

16. A method according to claim 14, wherein the bacterium of the genus *Agrobacterium* is *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*.

17. A method according to claim 14, wherein the tissue is selected from protoplasts, cells, or calli derived from mature embryo or immature embryo of rice, wheat, maize, barley, oat, rye, millet, or sorghum.

18. A method according to claim 1 further comprising:

regenerating the monocot plant transformed with the DNA molecule that increases tolerance to salt stress and drought stress to form a transgenic monocot plant.

19. A transgenic monocot plant transformed with a DNA molecule that increases tolerance to salt stress and drought stress operably linked to at least one ABRC unit and a minimal promoter.

20. A transgenic monocot plant according to claim 19, wherein the monocot plant is selected from the group consisting of rice, wheat, maize, barley, oat, rye, millet, and sorghum.

21. A transgenic monocot plant according to claim 20, wherein the monocot plant is rice.

22. A transgenic monocot plant according to claim 19, wherein the DNA molecule that increases tolerance to salt stress and drought stress is selected from the group consisting of a Δ^1-pyrroline-5-carboxylate synthetase gene, *P5CS* -129A, *Hva1*, COR47, a mannitol 1-P-dehydrogenase gene, a gene for the biosynthesis of polyamines, a gene for the biosynthesis of glycine betaine, trehalose, D-ononitol or fructans, and a gene for regulating the expression of stress-responsive genes.

23. A transgenic monocot plant according to claim 19, wherein the minimal promoter is Act1-100 of rice, a shortened α-amylase promoter of barley or rice, a shortened maize ubiquitin promoter, or a shortened CaMV 35S promoter.

24. A transgenic monocot plant according to claim 19, wherein the at least one ABRC is from a barley *HVA22* gene or a barley *HVA1* gene.

25. A transgenic monocot plant according to claim 19, wherein the expression cassette comprises up to four of the ABRC units operably linked together.

26. A transgenic monocot plant according to claim 19 further comprising:

a DNA sequence encoding a selectable marker.

27. A transgenic monocot plant according to claim 19, wherein the DNA molecule that increases tolerance to salt stress and drought stress operably linked to at least one ABRC unit and a minimal promoter is salt stress or drought stress inducible.

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